

Before the FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review -
Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules
and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202
of the Telecommunications Act of 1996,
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking,
MM Docket No. 02-277, (rel. Sept. 23, 2002)

To: The Secretary, FCC Commissioners, and Chief, Media Bureau

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, the Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In order to secure its goals of promoting competition, diversity, and localism within the mass media, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question (and, ideally, restore those that were eliminated by the Telecommunications Act of 1996). These rules serve the public interest by limiting the ability of a few companies to dominate thoroughly the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative effects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more narrow.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. The Framers of the Constitution believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to continue merging and to overwhelm smaller outlets offering distinctly different points of view, our ability to have an open, informed discussion from a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question during this proceeding.

I also support the FCC's plan to hold a public hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, in February 2003. I strongly encourage the Commission to hold similar hearings in all parts of the country and to solicit the widest possible participation from the public. The rarified atmosphere of an FCC rulemaking session is not an appropriate decision-making venue when questions as profound as the freedom of our media are at stake. I urge the Commissioners to come out and meet some of the people who do not have a direct financial interest in this issue, but who have a vested social interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is important that the Commission take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Sincerely,

Doug Battema

